

## RETURNED MEN TELL OF TRANSPORT CONDITIONS

Sworn Evidence at Court of Enquiry Reveals Vermin-Haunted Quarters, Bad Food, Crowding of Cripples Into Lower Decks, and Jailing of Men Where There Was No Escape if Hit

(Special to Toronto Star.)  
Ottawa, April 2.—The following brief synopsis of the evidence given under oath at the court of enquiry held at Ottawa into conditions on transports carrying wounded soldiers back to Canada, commencing on or about March 13 and ending March 18, has unusual interest. Some of the witnesses' evidence had to be taken at their bedside in hospital, in one case one was dying, and his evidence was given for him by his brother. This soldier has since died and was buried on Thursday last, 21st inst. (late Gilbert Ross Slack.)

Evidence was given covering complaints on thirteen ships. Evidence was given by witnesses ranging in rank from lieutenant-colonels to privates. Complaints on all ships were fully corroborated, with one exception, and showed a very deplorable state of affairs, especially on one on the voyage ending Nov. 16 last. In all forty-two witnesses were heard. One witness, Gen. G. Belcombe, stated in his evidence that quite a number had told him personally that they would have given evidence had it not been held in camera.

Very clear and positive evidence was given showing some soldiers had been placed in the clinic or guard room which is situated on one of the lower decks and were locked in, so that if the ship was torpedoed these unfortunate men would have been drowned like rats in a trap. This occurred on two ships and was sworn to positively by witnesses who tried to open the door in one case. In the other case witnesses saw the orderly officer unlock the door and relock it during his tour of inspection.

Captain Got Men Released.

On a certain transport one witness who was on sentry at the ship's bridge swore that he heard the ship's captain have an angry altercation with the O. C. troops regarding soldiers locked up in the clinic, and ordering him to release them at once. He stated further that he was relieved on his beat in time to go down and witness the release of these men, and saw seven or eight men released. He did not know any of them, but stated he knew positively of one man who had been confined for two and a half days, as he had tried to pass cigarettes to him. There was a sentry outside, who paced up and down in front of the clinic.

Evidence was given by the sergeant who wrote out all the ship's daily orders on the typewriter, who swore he had no knowledge of any imprisonments being awarded to any soldiers on that voyage, showing that if men were imprisoned, as sworn to, they were not even given a trial. Evidence was given showing these men were confined for smoking between decks, where the crew were allowed to smoke, and that they naturally thought they had a right to smoke there also, and that the ship's captain on being complained to by the men themselves, cheerfully gave them permission to smoke on this deck.

Evidence was also given by sergeants and other N. C. O.'s of long experience that they had never seen anything like it in their lives, that the discipline was the worst they had ever seen, that there was a state of chaos throughout the voyage, that no roster of duties was kept, that invalids were put on watertight compartment duty on the lower decks. In some cases they were left on duty for over fourteen hours without relief, although complaints had been made after the parties had done six hours' continuous duty, but they were not relieved until eight and a half hours later.

On one ship it was shown by a number of troops on board that there was no stateroom accommodation for upwards of fifteen hundred to two thousand men, yet it was also shown that quite a number of invalids, and in some cases cripples, were lying on deck floors and in corridors all through the voyage. Some were given berths when within two days of Halifax.

Evidence was also given showing that the O. C. troops had not visited some parts of the ship at all, until he was brought down by an officer of the 2nd Battalion to whom the men had complained. The O. C. admitted in their presence he did not know they were there. Furthermore, it was shown none of these men had attended a lifeboat drill, nor had they been assigned to any lifeboat. No Red Cross letters were on this voyage, according to all the witnesses. When men left Buxton they got breakfast at 8 a. m. and not a further food until 8 p. m. and some not until next morning. No ration was given the troops at Buxton to carry on the train. On all the ships where the food was complained of the men were able to buy good food, such as chicken pie, etc., from the ships' stewards and all they wanted, so long as they had the money. Quite a lot of evidence was given of this nature, to show there was no scarcity of food and good food, too. Bitter complaints were also made of the herding of men on the upper decks of ships while a few officers and first-class passengers used a very large part of the ship for promenade, quite out of proportion to their numbers. Some ships, however, had better arrangements made in this regard.

Bitter complaints were made time and again of staff sergeants and others being given staterooms who had never been to France, whilst cripples from the trenches had to go down to the bottom decks in the stateroom without berths, and if they were unable to get into their hammocks they slept on the mess tables or on the floor.

One witness said he would rather have been cross in a troopship. This man was given a ticket, but no berth. He made personal inspection, and found lots of vacant cabins on C deck; afterwards he and cripples were given berths.

Mistery on Board Ship.

Disgraceful scenes occurred on board, and troops hooted the O. C.; also sailors on board hooted the O. C. and openly threatened to throw him overboard. The captain of the ship intervened to preserve order and allotted deck space himself.

Another witness who travelled on Dec. 29th last, saw cripples who had to be lifted into their hammocks on the bottom deck. He was a cripple, but was put on duty for twelve hours at a time. He paraded to the O. C., and some instances into a state of mutiny, and his kit stolen and saw sailors wearing military clothing, got very filthy, etc. He knew of a woman who he was told was the wife of a soldier overseas, who was found by a private of the C. A. M. C., who hearing her moaning went to her cabin, of which she was the sole occupant, and found her unconscious. She had given birth to a child; the child was lying dead on the bed. He went with the private to the woman's cabin and saw both woman and dead child. The child had been dead for from twenty-four to forty-eight hours, so the M. O. said afterwards. She was a cripple, in a four-berth cabin on C deck.

Utter Disregard for Cripples.

Quite a lot of evidence was given throughout showing utter disregard for the cripples and invalids, where lots of better accommodation could have been had; that the men presented their grievances properly, but without redress; that they were lashed and goaded in some instances into a state of mutiny, and hooted their O. C.'s on parade and on leaving ship; showing gross lack of control and incompetency and an utter disregard for the laws of humanity, on the part of the officers. But one and all spoke in the highest terms of their treatment on reaching the port of disembarkation, after enduring, with two exceptions. Here the coach was cold and some caught cold and one contracted pneumonia.

Witnesses also said that the rules laid down by the Admiralty regarding boat drill were not carried out, and the orders forbidding shooting at the water were not carried out, so that in the event of a crisis one would be deprived of a chance for his life and drowned like a rat in a trap.

Another man apparently disregarded was that no troops returning home invalided can be imprisoned or confined without being examined by a board and pronounced able and fit to stand the punishment. As the highest category of returning invalided and wounded troops is C 3, no one can be imprisoned without being examined by a board similar to the one which examined him at Buxton.

Evidence of Dying Paralytic.

Evidence of Pte. C. Slack, given for him

by his brother, Pte. Gilbert Ross Slack, who was dying at the time of taking evidence.

My brother was taken on board a ship last September, suffering from paralysis, caused by injury to his spine through shrapnel. He was taken to a ward, where there were about twenty other patients, said afterwards eight of whom were epileptics, or men who were subject to fits. He was paralyzed from the waist down and required diet and very special treatment twice daily. There were men almost continuously in fits, two or three at once, and as this greatly distressed my brother, I asked the captain in charge of the ward to have him moved into another room. This was refused on the plea of insufficient space, but the orderly told me he knew of at least twenty empty beds on the ship, and that he would get my brother moved, so I stayed with him all through the daytime, but at night had to go down to my own room, with the stripping off of barn doors by the German Red Cross nurses.

All these deplorable and disgraceful actions everywhere the most notorious, caused by the want of a special unit, but to a brave foe which, it must be admitted, has been recorded of the Prussians throughout history. One of our captives, badly wounded, tells me he was put into a cattle truck with nine wounded German privates and another English officer. On stopping opposite an out-

going troop train the soldiers crowded around to see the prisoners and one began talking to the British officer in English, telling him how much he admired the English and how soon they were going to be beaten. Then followed physical abuse, and it was only the movement of the train which prevented more serious trouble.

It is utterly sad to think that no attempt was made by any of the German officers to restrain this ferocity. Indeed, it is said in the report that on several occasions when the German inhabitants offered the British prisoners food the German officers explained that, as the prisoners were English, they were not to receive it. The treatment given to French and Belgian prisoners is far more humane, the difference being evidently planned with the purpose of securing dissension between the Allies. There is just one consolation, that during the progress of British prisoners through Belgium and France determined efforts were made by the women of these countries to feed the men, and in spite of the abuse and blows of the Germans they actually accomplished their aim of bringing food and drink to the wounded. When German women behave in this barbarous way to the sick and wounded, it is difficult to hold the view that we are not at war with the German people.

From this significant and brutal picture it is a relief to turn to something altogether different, if only to remind us that even the awful brutality now mentioned is not absolutely universal. One of the magnanimous deeds of the war which stands in such magnificent contrast to this brutality is told in Coningsby Dawson's "Carry On".

"During one fierce engagement a British officer saw a German officer impaled on the barbed wire, writhing in anguish. The fire was dreadful, yet he still hung there unscathed. At length the British officer could stand it no longer. He said, quietly, 'I can't bear to look at that poor chap any longer. So he went out under the hail of shell, released him, took him on his shoulders, and carried him to the German trench. The firing ceased. Both sides watched the act with wonder. Then the Commander in the German trench came forward, took from his own bosom the Iron Cross, and pinned it on the breast of the British officer.'"

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Before planting, if the roots are too long, they should be shortened in as it is no advantage to have them longer than four or five inches. It is a well-known fact that plants absorb water by means of their roots and give water up to the air through their leaves. In a newly set plant, which has not yet become established in the soil, the absorption of water is very slow, but the loss of water through the leaves continues. In a dry season, therefore, we should reduce this loss to a minimum, by removing all leaves which have opened when we transplant; ordinarily two leaves are left. Do not expose the plants unnecessarily to the drying effects of the wind and sun, but keep them shaded and moist while planting.

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## Two Years' Illness Cured By Two Boxes

Joseph Larouche Tells of Dodd's Kidney Pills

He Suffered From Cramps in The Muscles and Headaches, But Now He Is Well Again

Lac Bouchette, Lac St. Jean Co., Que., April 8.—(Special.)—"I can assure you Dodd's Kidney Pills made me well." So says M. Joseph Larouche, well known and highly respected here. For two years he was a sufferer from cramps in the muscles and headaches. He was treated by a doctor, but got no permanent relief till he used Dodd's Kidney Pills. "You may publish my statement that Dodd's Kidney Pills made me well," says Mr. Larouche in an interview. "I was ill two years, and I was cramps in my muscles, and suffered from terrible headaches. Two boxes of Dodd's Kidney Pills cured me."

That Mr. Larouche's troubles came from his kidneys is evidenced by the fact that he found a cure in Dodd's Kidney Pills. They are simply and purely a kidney remedy. The reason they are credited with cures of rheumatism, lumbago, dropsy, backache, diabetes and other ailments is that all of these are either kidney diseases or diseases caused by sick kidneys.

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